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STRENGTHS ENHANCEMENT TRAINING: SELF-CONCEPT
AND SELF-ACTUALIZATION

by

Tony J. Strelich

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Psychology

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Logan, Utah

1976

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Tony J. Strelich

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Abstract

Strengths Enhancement Training: Self-Concept
And Self-Actualization

by

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Major Professor: Dr. William Dobson
Department: Psychology

The strengths enhancement training program was developed and evaluated in order to determine empirically if a group method designed specifically to assist subjects in the identification of personal strengths, resources, and potentials, would be effective in broadening their perceptions of themselves in a positive direction.

The strengths enhancement training program was based primarily on the work of Herbert A. Otto, using the Multiple Strengths Perception method as the central component of the training program. That method was pilot tested, and program modifications were made on two occasions.

A pretest-posttest control group design was used to assess the 80 Introductory Psychology volunteers. Twenty-eight subjects were randomly assigned to the strengths enhancement condition, 24 students to the discussion group control condition, and 28 students to the no treatment control condition.

The students who were assigned to the strengths enhancement condition and the discussion group control condition met in small groups, three groups for each condition. The subgroups in both conditions met for eight weekly sessions of one and a half hours duration.

The strengths enhancement training was the independent variable. Self-concept (as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale) and self-perception (as measured by the Personal Orientation Inventory) were the dependent variables.

The format of the discussion group control condition was patterned after a class taught at Utah State University, Psychology 121 (Issues in Human Relations). Principles of effective human relationship, including trust, self-disclosure, and listening skills, were presented to subjects as a discussion stimulus at the beginning of each weekly group session. The Psychology 121 course content was based on self-actualization theory.

Analysis of covariance results indicated that students who participated in the strengths enhancement training condition scored significantly higher (.05 level) than students in the no treatment control condition on the Total Positive Score of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. Results did not appear to be influenced by defensive distortions or students' tendencies to over-affirm their positive attributes on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale.

Subjects in the discussion group control condition scored higher on 10 of the 12 Personal Orientation Inventory scales than subjects in the other condition, with significance occurring on the Inner-directed scale (.10 level)

and the Self-acceptance scale (.025 level). Data suggest that students in the discussion control condition did not attempt to fake a good impression or present a pseudo-self-actualization profile on the Personal Orientation Inventory.

The strengths enhancement training program was effective in modifying participants' self-concepts (as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale), but no differences were evident on the self-perception measures of the Personal Orientation Inventory. The variables which contribute to self-concept and self-actualization do not appear to be highly related.

(101 pages)

Introduction

The theoretical and philosophical position that man is a being with an innate capacity to grow and develop in a way in which his life will become more satisfying, meaningful and productive, not only for himself but as a contributor to mankind, has received considerable support in the last two decades. This optimistic viewpoint has been postulated in many ways. Writers such as Rogers (1951), Maslow (1963), Otto (1967a) and Jourard (1968) have referred to this internal state as the "tendency to actualize," the "actualization potential," "human potential" and "growth."

One way of referring to or describing this internal state is to refer to the person's self-concept. A person with a positive self-concept views himself and his environment in a positive way. He is satisfied with himself, takes pleasure in living, relates well with others and has accepted the limitations of his physical environment. He is referred to as adjusted, actualizing or becoming.

Persons with a negative self-concept tend to be people with feelings of unworthiness-considering themselves inferior and viewing their environment as bland or nihilistic. These people are often referred to as maladjusted, dysfunctional, or, in extreme cases, psychotic or neurotic.

Self-concept has been considered from a phenomenological point of view: one experiences himself and his environment; and the expression of

this experience, in speech, feelings and behavior, defines the parameters in which self-concept is theoretically constructed. "I am a good person," "My job gives me pleasure" are verbal statements or behaviors which are expressed by a person with a positive internal state.

From another point of view, the behavioristic position, self-concept is one way of describing the way a person acts. "I am a good person" and "I like my job" are verbal behaviors which result in a positive "self-concept."

The link between the construct of self-concept and observable behavior has been well established. Seeman (1966), McClain (1969), and Thomas and Seeman (1971) found that persons who were perceived by their peers as being usually effective typically evidenced more positive self-concepts than did persons who were perceived as more nearly average in their day to day behavior.

Skinner and Rogers have argued not only from different philosophical positions as to the "nature of man" but also as to the methods to be utilized in assisting the "maladjusted" individual. Scrutinization of the above positions yields a common substantive principle derived from the constructs of "unconditional positive regard" (Rogers, 1951) and "positive reinforcement" (Skinner, 1971). Whether psychological "growth" is dependent upon an internal or external frame of reference, or even some combination of each, it is clear that "positive experience" is necessary for psychological growth.

Statement of the Problem

When it is known that self-concept is an important variable in psychological growth, and it has been found that individuals of high self-esteem are more likely to engage in successful goal-oriented behavior than those of low self-esteem (Denmark & Guttentag, 1967; Korman, 1970), it is considered important to develop methods of enhancing self-concept and testing the effectiveness of those methods.

A broad area in psychology that has attempted this task is found within the Sensitivity Encounter Movement. Maslow (1962, 1971) has developed a description of the self-actualized person as one who is more fully functioning and lives a more enriched life than does the average person. Such a person is seen as developing his unique capabilities or potentialities free of the inhibitions and emotional turmoil of those less self-actualizing. The "fully functioning person," according to Rogers (1961), is characterized by his "openness to experience," "existential living," "organismic trusting," "experiential freedom," and "creativity."

Unlike the multidimensional model developed by Brammer and Shostrom (1968), which suggests that self-actualization may be the goal of the psychotherapeutic process, those most identified with the sensitivity movement tend to attempt to motivate the actualization potential within the "normal" person through a series of training group experiences. Based on perceptual theory (Gestalt), some training groups focus on the expansion of sensory awareness (Stevens, 1973), utilizing guided fantasy and dream trips.

Others focus on the "basic encounter" (Rogers, 1967, 1970); encounter groups (Schutz, 1967a), which utilize the "hot seat" technique; marathon groups (Howard, 1970); nude group marathons (Bindrim, 1972); and human potential groups (Otto, 1961-62, 1964, 1968).

Criticism of sensitivity training is as varied as the claims of its proponents and is often as radical. The John Birch Society has viewed sensitivity and encounter as subversive activity (Reidy, 1972). From a more objective standpoint, the sensitivity movement has been criticized for its lack of theoretical support (Burton, 1969); high casualty rates (participants who drop out of the groups or are psychologically harmed) (Gottschalk & Pattison, 1969; Jaffe & Sherl, 1969); lack of training of group leaders, i. e., not being trained in the group process (Reidy, 1972); and lack of objective outcome measures.

From a learning or behavioral point of view, some of these techniques have been criticized for their lack of the systematic use of learning principles (Eachus, 1972). In general, the major thrust of objective criticism seems to be the lack of scientific inquiry. This lack is somewhat understandable in that most proponents of the sensitivity movement are clinicians rather than scientists. This study is an attempt at supplying some of this much-needed systematic evaluation.

In 1959 the Human Potentials Research Project was begun at the University of Georgia under the direction of Herbert A. Otto. That project was expanded, and research projects in the area of personal and family

strengths and human potentials were continued under the auspices of the Graduate School of Social Work, University of Utah (Otto & Griffiths, 1961; Dover, 1965).

In working with the potentialities of people, we have focused to a great extent on the enlargement of their self-concept, their self-perceptions and self-image. We find that the average healthy individual with one or more years of college education has a very limited awareness of his personality strengths or resources. If asked to list his personality strengths, he will, on the average, note only six strength items. On the other hand, if asked to write out his weaknesses or problem areas, he will usually fill several pages. (Otto, 1967b, p. 295)

A number of methods were utilized in the above studies to promote the ability of participants to recognize their strengths, resources, capacities, and potentials. Some of these methods are: strength roles and assigned strength roles, i.e., role playing in and out of the group setting; analysis of daily habits and living environment; recalling Minerva Experiences, i.e., meaningful positive childhood experiences; and the Multiple Strengths Perception method.

Of all the methods used in the University of Utah project and several follow-up studies, the Multiple Strengths Perception method was rated as being most effective (Otto, 1964; Hansen, 1964; and Dover, 1965). In summarizing his research on human potential, Otto (1967b) stated,

To a considerable extent, we have been successful in helping to establish a learned response, the actualization potential, as a motivational factor. For example, ninety percent of our laboratory classes wish to continue as a group after the class is over since they feel they have just begun their task of actualizing. (p. 302)

Otto's (1961-62) use of the Multiple Strengths Perception method "seems to have contributed to the enhancement of self-image of the participants," as members reported feeling "more capable," "more competent," and willing to try out new ideas and activities (p. 185). Later he concluded that members can "obtain increased self-confidence, self-esteem and self-assurance" (Otto, 1968, p. 82).

The above conclusions were based on evaluative questionnaires which asked for students' opinions and reactions to the group experience. The validity of the above results is defended in two ways. First, the theory upon which the research was based is primarily phenomenological. Johnson (1971) stated that "subjective experience cannot be reconciled with public validation. A subjective phenomenon can be validated only by a subjective encounter with it. Subjective phenomena are knowable, but only by direct subjective encounter" (p. 97). Secondly, the nature of the research was developmental and exploratory; and rigorous experimental design and control appeared to be more appropriate for subsequent investigations.

Since a positive self-concept is considered a central component of the more encompassing construct of self-actualization, this study will limit its emphasis to determining more objectively the relationship between the Multiple Strengths Perception technique and self-concept.

To develop an efficacious treatment with regard to the hypotheses formulated, the Multiple Strengths Perception method was pilot tested, and

the group treatment was modified on two occasions. (A detailed description of pilot testing will be given in the procedure section of this paper.)

Definition of Terms

Personal Strength. A characteristic, perception, ability, skill or value that has a positive valence and is admissable to awareness.

Human Potential. An assumption of the nature of man, referring to the maximum of his inherent capabilities.

Multiple Strengths Perception method. A group technique developed by Otto (1962).

Strengths Enhancement Training. A group procedure developed to enhance self-concept.

Self-Concept. The public representation of a person's overall level of self-esteem which is based on an organized configuration of the self.

Self-Actualization. Refers to the process of realizing human potential through action.

Subject. A solicited student volunteer.

Delimitations

1. Only students at Utah State University were used in this study.
2. A larger sample would have permitted more extensive analysis of high versus low self-concept differences.
3. Evaluation was conducted with paper and pencil instruments, and behavioral measures were not obtained.

4. Only the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale was used to measure self-concept.

5. Only two scales of the Personal Orientation Inventory were used to measure self-perception within the self-actualization paradigm.

6. There were no provisions implemented to control for the Hawthorne effect.

7. There were no provisions to control for the group leader effect.

The conclusions drawn from this study should hold for consideration of these limitations and their possible effects.

Review of the Literature

This review of the literature will focus primarily on three areas contributing to the development of this study: (1) theory and research studies which produced the Multiple Strength's Perception method (MSP), (2) pilot testing and research findings contributing to the Strengths Enhancement Training treatment, and (3) self-concept as a dependent variable.

Human Potential Theory

The idea that man has innate potentials and strengths on which to build or "actualize" has received support early in this century.

You must absolutely rid yourself of the idea that the mental condition is an entirely fixed one, which is beyond all expectation of moulding and adjusting. Your ancestors and mine continued to believe in that fallacy for centuries; and that belief did as much as anything could do to limit their intellectual and moral growth, to make real improvement no more than a blind chance of blind experience, of unreasoning uncertainty. (Oppenheim, 1911, p. 9)

In his book Human Potentials Gardner Murphy describes three kinds of human nature: (1) the biological individuality, (2) the cultural mold, and (3) the creative thrust of understanding. He states that the majority of human beings remain locked in the "cultural mold" stage, which is acceptable but inhibits development of potential because of what he terms "socially shared autisms," i.e., people conforming to the demands of the culture. Because of cultural demands, the individual's creativity is stifled; and actualization

of potential at the "creative thrust of understanding" stage of human nature is thwarted. He suggests a need for establishment of methods which will permit human beings to break through this cultural mold and be able to experience life at a higher stage of human nature. Such methods as perseveration and encouragement of a generalized curiosity, the ability to relax and withdraw from immediate external pressures, and stimulating and exploiting the unconscious genetic memory may be used for breaking through this "cultural mold" (Murphy, 1958, p. 15).

Maddi refers to those theorists who indicate that the primary force in man is the tendency to express capabilities, potentials or talents as "fulfillment" theorists. The idea of man fulfilling potentials has received considerable theoretical support. Goldstein "assumes that the core characteristics of personality are the inherent potentialities, and the core tendency is to push toward realization in actual living of these inherent potentialities" (Maddi, 1972, p. 97).

Fromm (1947) expresses to a great extent the same philosophy when he reasons that man is alone, as he is a unique entity and is aware of himself as a separate identity. For Fromm, the aim of man's life is the unfolding of his powers according to his nature, rather than rationalizing or conforming blindly to the demands of culture. Man can affirm his human potentiality only by realizing his individuality.

Don Juan, the mentor of anthropologist Castaneda (1968, 1971, 1972, 1974), contends that consensus does not define reality but holds man in the

"tonal" --where his value and self-confidence are defined by conformity. This is not bad, but man must "stop the world" and "see" before his human nature will unfold.

The concept that "actualizing" behavior and "maladjusted" behavior are learned by experiencing one's environment has been advanced as a theoretical principle. Adler (1939) refers to "styles of life" as a rubric which incorporates the person's habits and traits. These styles or patterns are not static but are viewed as ones that are constructive versus ones that are destructive. Otto (1967b), in summarizing his research on human potential development, indicated that he was "trying to establish a learned response as a source of drive" (p. 302). He reports that to a considerable extent he was successful in establishing a learned response, the actualizing potential as a "motivational factor." For example, 90% of the subjects in the laboratory classes wished to continue as a group after the experience was over, as they felt that they had just begun the actualizing process.

This orientation agrees with O. J. Harvey, who concluded:

One's interlocked matrix of concepts, operating as an evaluative baseline or cognitive metering system, serves, it is assumed, as the psychological referent points or internal standards in relations to which motivational arousal is effected and must be considered . . . In fact there probably is no motive at the human level that operates independent of learning or conceptual components. (Harvey, 1963, p. 105)

In broad terms, then, the thrust of the present study is to provide a "learning" or "growth" experience for college students.

Growth, according to Jourard (1968), is:

The dis-integration of one way of experiencing the world, followed by a re-organization of this experience, a re-organization that includes the new disclosure of the world. The disorganization, or even shattering, of one way to experience the world, is brought on by new disclosures that were always being transmitted, but were usually ignored. (p. 2)

Development of the Multiple Strengths Perception technique. The Multiple

Strengths Perception method began as part of Human Potentialities Research Project in 1959 (Otto, 1961-62). The second phase of the project was conducted with Social Work students at the University of Utah for the purpose of identifying personal strengths and developing methods of working with them (Otto and Griffith, 1963).

A number of methods were utilized in the above studies to promote the ability of participants to recognize their strengths, resources, capacities, and potentials. Some of these methods are Strengths Roles and Assigned Strength Roles, i.e., role playing in and out of the group setting; analysis of personal daily habits and living environment; recalling Minerva Experiences, i.e., meaningful, positive childhood experiences; and the Multiple Strengths Perception method.

The following is a description of the procedure known as the Multiple Strengths Perception method: During the group process a member volunteers to be the "target person," that is, to have the focus of the group. He then enumerates to the group what he perceives to be his personal strengths and

potentials. When he completes this exercise, he then requests the group members to point out to him what other strengths or potentialities he might have of which he is not aware, and also what factors or problems they see keeping him from using these strengths. When this phase is completed, the leader requests the group to fantasize about where this person might be in five years if he were to actualize all the strengths and potentials they had listed.

Of all the methods used in the University of Utah project, the Multiple Strengths Perception method was rated as being the most effective (Otto, 1964; Hansen, 1964; and Dover, 1965). That conclusion was based on responses to evaluative questionnaires which asked for students' reactions and perceptions to the group experience. The validity of the above results is defended in two ways. First, the theory upon which the research was based is primarily phenomenological. Johnson (1971) indicates that "subjective experience cannot be reconciled with public validation. A subjective phenomenon can be validated only by a subjective encounter with it. Subjective phenomena are knowable, but only by direct subjective encounter" (p. 97). Secondly, the nature of the research was exploratory and developmental; and rigorous experimental design and control appeared to be more appropriate for later evaluation.

Utilizing the dependent variable self-concept in this experimental study is a logical choice from both a theoretical and methodological framework. Although Otto's (1967b, 1968) conclusions regarding "motivation of the

actualization potential" and "enhancement of self-concept" must be held tenable, the content and focus of the Multiple Strengths Perception method is theoretically consistent with the construct of self-concept as conceptualized by Fitts (1970). Since positive self-concept is considered a central component of the more encompassing construct of self-actualization, the emphasis of this study will be to attempt to determine more objectively the relationship between the treatment and self-concept.

Rogers (1951), Fromm (1956), and Buber (1958) all indicate the importance of the interpersonal situation when considering self-concept. When a person feels hopeless and unworthy, he will disregard others and in many ways treat them poorly; but when he begins to accept himself he also gains in appreciation and acceptance of others.

The above theorists and scientists, then, have contributed to building a new image of man. This is the image of a man who has the capacity to "grow" (Jourard, 1968) and develop throughout his life span (Maslow, 1954), who has tremendous latent and untapped powers and abilities which can be realized (Otto, 1967a).

While the strengths enhancement method was modified and expanded into its present form, it was the intent of the investigator to limit the various "methods" developed by Otto to provide a treatment that was parsimonious and more conducive to experimental control.

Self-Concept

The self-concept or self-structure may be thought of as an organized configuration of perceptions of the self which are admissible to awareness. It is composed of such elements as the perceptions of one's characteristics and abilities; the percepts and concepts of the self in relation to others and the environment; the value qualities which are perceived as associated with experiences and objects; and goals and ideals which are perceived as having positive and negative valence. (Rogers, 1951, p. 136)

The relationship between self-concept and observable behavior has received attention in the literature. Seeman (1959) studied the relationship between self-concept and behavioral competence. He conceptualized behavioral competence in terms of personality integration. The Personality Integration Test (Duncan, 1966) was devised as a way of identifying persons of high behavioral competence. In independent studies using different populations, Seeman (1966) and Duncan (1966) found evidence demonstrating self-concept difference between persons judged high in behavioral competence and randomly selected peers.

In a correlation study Felker and Thomas (1971) found a positive relationship between high self-concept and internal locus of control, i. e., those students with a high self-concept tend to claim responsibility for school success, while those students who did not achieve academically tend to report an external locus of control.

From a behavioral viewpoint, Marston (1965) considers self-concept as a "construct that is essentially the sum total of self-directed verbalizations. This type of self-directed speech can be viewed as a link between self-concept

and overt behavior" (p. 1). It is implied, then, that a person with a negative self-concept gives himself few positive verbal evaluations and little verbal reinforcement.

This contention appears to have merit, especially when viewed in the interpersonal context. Results of a study with the FIRO-B (Schutz, 1967b) show that subjects with healthy self-concepts are more active in behaviors which involve expressing affection, inclusion, and control than they are in seeking these behaviors from others (Thompson, 1972). Two reasons that psychiatric patients have problems, as postulated by Fitts (1970), are that they have not learned effective interpersonal behavior and do not have an appropriate behavioral repertoire for eliciting the desired responses (positive reactions) from others. Secondly, as a group they are highly variable in behavior and tend to fluctuate between complete denial of their own needs and unrestricted demands on others. Advocates of personal-growth groups indicate the importance of sharing one's self, being congruent or, as Jourard (1971) has conceptualized, having the willingness to "self-disclose."

Shapiro (1968) divided 210 subjects into three groups of high, medium, and low self-concept, as measured by the Total P score of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. Subjects were paired into various combinations, such as high with high, high with medium, and high with low; and each subject was asked to interview the other, using an adaption of the Jourard Self-Disclosure Questionnaire, JSDQ (Jourard, 1964), as the structure for the interview. He

concluded that subjects high in self-concept can be expected to also be high in self-disclosing behavior.

Thompson (1972) reported findings by Doyne, who studied the relationship between self-concept and self-disclosure through participation in a five day sensitivity training lab. Results suggest that "self-disclosure can be viewed as an important ingredient in the process of self-concept change related to sensitivity training" (p. 63). Vosen's (1966) experimental study is in agreement with the above studies. He concluded that increase in self-disclosing behavior generates an increase in self-esteem.

Assessing Self-Concept

The most commonly studied constructs, which together or separately are conceptualized as self-concept, include attitudes such as self-esteem, self-acceptance, congruence between self and ideal self, self-satisfaction, personal self, and self-regard.

One of the earliest used techniques for assessing these concepts is the Q-sort. The set of Q-sort items (Butler and Haigh, 1954) which has been used extensively as an index of self-concept is the group of 100 self-referent statements originally employed in the research on nondirective psychotherapy described in Rogers and Dymond (1954).

Q-sort sets differ greatly with respect to item length and complexity. They range from simple adjective (Block & Thomas, 1955), to brief phrases or sentences (Butler & Haigh, 1954), to sentences with several parts

(Edelson & Jones, 1954), and even to paragraphs (Stotland, Thorley, Thomas, Cohen, & Zander, 1957).

Some self-report methods utilize a (Self-Ideal) discrepancy score as well as a direct Self-Acceptance score to index self-regard. Bills' Index of Adjustment and Values (Bills, Vance, & McLean, 1951) is an example of this type of instrument.

Some instruments measure general self-regard through discrepancy scores rather than by subjects' direct statements of self-acceptance. Worchel's (1957) 54 item Self-Activity Inventory (SAI) is a self-concept measure which purports to describe ways of coping with hostility, achievement, sexual and dependency needs and their frustration. This device was designed especially for men adapting to military life. Another measure of this type is the Interpersonal Check List developed by LaForge and Suczek (1955), to measure a number of variables defined by the Interpersonal Personality System (Leary, 1957). The check list is used to get: (a) a self-description, (b) an ideal-self description, and (c) a measure of "self-acceptance" in terms of discrepancies between self- and ideal self-descriptions.

Osgood's Semantic Differential Scales (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957) have received considerable attention in the literature. The subject rates different concepts using paired-opposite adjectives on a seven point scale, four being the point of indifference.

The most frequently used methods, then, for inferring overall self-concept are questionnaires, rating scales, and adjective check lists. In terms

of the operations used as a basis for inferring self-concept, several main categories of measures may be distinguished: (a) those which purport to tap self-acceptance directly, i. e., by asking the subject how he feels about his standing on the stated characteristics; (b) those which use this direct approach and also derive a discrepancy score between separately obtained self- and ideal-ratings; and (c) those which attempt to measure a multidimensional self-concept with corrections for defensiveness and dimension variability.

The self-concept instrument used in this study was of the last type.

A brief description will be given here with detailed discussion provided in the next section.

Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. The T.S.C.S. consists of 100 self-descriptive statements to which the subject responds in a five point scale ranging from "completely true" to "completely false," according to the way the item describes his own perception of himself. Ninety items, equally divided into positive and negative statements, make up the eight dimension subscales of the test, which when combined yield a total Self-Concept score (TP), which reflects the overall level of self-esteem. The eight dimension subscales are: Identity Self, Self Satisfaction, Behavioral Self, Physical Self, Moral-Ethical Self, Personal Self, Family Self, and Social Self. The remaining ten items, which were taken from the L scale of the M.M.P.I. (1951) constitute the Self-Criticism score (SC), a measure of overt defensiveness. This form also yields a Variability score (TV), which measures inconsistency from one area of self-perception to another, and a Conflict score

(TC), which determines the degree to which a subject's responses to positive items differ from, or conflict with, his responses to negative items in the same area of self-perception. This device is essentially self-administered, with instructions provided within the test booklet. The test is usually completed within 20 to 30 minutes.

Objectives and Hypotheses

The objectives of this study were to develop a strengths enhancement group procedure and to test its effect on the direct enhancement of self-concept of college students. The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. No significant difference will exist in self-concept scores between students who receive strengths enhancement training and those who do not receive the strengths enhancement training.
2. No significant difference will exist in self-concept variability scores between students who receive strengths enhancement training and those who do not receive the strengths enhancement training.
3. No significant difference will exist in self-concept conflict scores between students who receive strengths enhancement training and those who do not receive the strengths enhancement training.
4. No significant difference will exist in self-concept scores between males and females who receive strengths enhancement training and those who do not receive the strengths enhancement training.
5. No significant difference will exist in the total self-concept change means between high self-concept (high-low-median split) and low self-concept students.

Hypotheses 1 through 5 were tested by use of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale.

6. No significant difference will exist in the inner-directed scores of male and female students who receive strengths enhancement training and those who do not receive the strengths enhancement training.

7. No significant difference will exist in the self-regard scores of male and female students who receive strengths enhancement training and those who do not receive the strengths enhancement training.

8. No significant difference will exist in the self-acceptance scores of male and female students who receive strengths enhancement training and those who do not receive the strengths enhancement training.

Hypotheses 6 through 8 were tested by use of the Personal Orientation Inventory.

Procedures

Development of Treatment Method

The treatment in this study will be referred to as strengths enhancement training and was hypothesized as a method to directly enhance and broaden the college student's perception of himself (self-concept) in a positive direction. To develop an efficacious treatment, the Multiple Strengths Perception technique has been pilot tested and modified on two occasions.

Pilot Test I. The first pilot test which utilized the Multiple Strengths Perception method occurred in May, 1975, with an outpatient sample at a local mental health clinic. The seven adult subjects, two females and five males, were meeting weekly in an ongoing therapy group. All members had had previous psychiatric hospitalizations ranging from six weeks to four months. The general purpose of the group was to provide follow-up care and prevent future hospitalizations. The diagnoses of six of the seven subjects placed them in the chronic category.

The group therapist, the experimenter, introduced the Multiple Strengths Perception method at the beginning of the tenth group meeting as an alternative to the usual group procedure. The Multiple Strengths Perception focus included only one group session, with two members declining to participate. Dependable variable measures on self-concept were not obtained;

however, clinical evaluations made by the therapist suggest subjects' positive reactions toward the treatment procedure. There was a tendency in this group for subjects to refocus on problem-oriented areas, reflected in statements referring to the difficulty of "thinking" of positive traits. Subjects in this group also had difficulty expressing strengths across a variety of categories, i.e., one subject would express strengths primarily in the "spiritual, religious" category, while another would express strengths in the "physical ability" category.

As a result of this observation, a "strengths cue chart," listing possible categories of human strengths, such as interpersonal relationships, relationship to authority, moral and ethical concerns, physical abilities, hobbies and creative feelings, and occupational strengths, was developed as a group project in the early sessions of the next group evaluated.

To assist the leader in directing this group project, a guide for possible strengths areas can be found in Otto (1967a, p. 236). Suggested areas are:

Sports and outdoor activities

Hobbies and Crafts

Expressive Arts

Health

Education, Training and Related Areas

Work, Vocation, Job, or Position

Special Aptitudes or Resources

Strengths Through Family

Intellectual Strengths

Aesthetic Strengths

Organizational Strengths

Imaginative and Creative Strengths

Relationship Strengths

Spiritual Strengths

Emotional Strengths

Praise and verbal reinforcement. Otto (1967b) suggested that group leaders use "praise" for members' efforts in the group process. For this study praise will be defined as "verbal reinforcement." Krasner (1965) described verbal reinforcement as the "systematic application of social reinforcement to influence the probability of another person emitting a specifiable verbal behavior" (p. 213).

From the literature it appears that verbal reinforcement can be effective in increasing or maintaining verbal output in the group setting. Abudabbeh, Prandoni, and Jensen (1972) designed a study to control for both the quantity and quality of verbalizations in the group setting. In the first treatment phase all verbalizations were verbally reinforced. During the second phase the criterion for reinforcement was changed so that only personally relevant verbalizations were reinforced. Both treatments were effective. This finding supports the tenet that certain preselected classes of verbal behavior can come under experimental control.

Eachus (1972), describing himself as a radical behaviorist, participated in a Lake Luzerne Laboratory training group and reported his observations in behavioristic terms. He suggested to the humanistic psychologist that in "helping people become more capable of reaching their potential" (p. 69), training group leaders can use operant technology (verbal reinforcement) within a group to reach humanistic ends. The preselected class of verbal behavior selected to be verbally reinforced was "positive-self" and "positive-other" statements made by the subjects.

Feedback. Also included in the second pilot test was the use of written feedback from the Multiple Strengths Perception method. Snyder and Shenkel (1975) found that persons will tend to accept a written personality description as accurate (.90) if it is prepared "expressly for them" (p. 53). Providing feedback in this form will allow subjects to review the list of strengths and potential descriptions developed in the group.

Pilot Test II. The above modifications were included in a pilot test conducted with adolescent subjects at the Wyoming State Hospital in June and July, 1975. Nineteen subjects were pretested (Tennessee Self-Concept Scale and California Personality Inventory), ranked and matched according to pre-test self-concept scores, and randomly assigned to the treatment and control conditions.

Treatment subjects met daily, Monday through Friday, for 15 one-hour sessions. Those students randomly assigned to the control condition received 15 one-hour periods of supervised activity. Supervision was

provided by the experimenter and treatment group coleader. Activities included softball, catch football and various gymnasium activities, including basketball and volleyball. All subjects were posttested two days after the completion of the group meetings.

Analysis of variance results indicated that there were no significant differences on the self-concept scores between the experimental and control groups. This was also true of personality dimensions measured by the California Personality Inventory, with the exception of the Communality (Cm) score, $F(1, 17) = 11.48$, $p < .001$, which would suggest either that treatment subjects were moving a degree toward a common pattern established by the Inventory or that subjects possibly made random responses to the Inventory. Examination of individual California Personality Inventory profiles suggests that there were no individual profiles similar to a random response set. Observation of the pre- and posttest sessions and examination of answer sheets, however, suggest that many subjects would periodically make a series of random responses or perseverations. The data provided, therefore, becomes suspicious, if not unreliable. Observation of students in the testing sessions, as compared to the treatment sessions, revealed subjects being somewhat resistant to the testing but accepting of, if not positive toward, the treatment procedure.

Frequencies of positive-self and positive-other verbalizations were tabulated (by two trained observers) for each subject, to investigate the

relationship between positive verbal behavior and self-concept. Because of the dubious nature of the Inventory data, this relationship could not be investigated.

Written descriptions of the strengths and potentials developed during the Multiple Strengths Perception sessions suggest that the frequency of positive statements in this group was high. The mean number of strengths and potentials listed by the "target" person was 31.2, and the group feedback mean was 20.2. (A sample of a written feedback sheet can be found in Appendix A.)

The decision to utilize "patient" populations for the pilot tests was based on the assumption that all persons have capacities, abilities, strengths, and potentials which, if recognized and utilized, will result in the enhancement of their psychological growth. It appears that the effects of a human potential group procedure designed to enhance strengths development will vary with the methods used, time interval, and population studied. It was determined that a population more similar to those utilized in the earlier studies in human potential development would more accurately reflect the effects of a strengths enhancement training group on self-concept.

Modifications

Two introductory techniques were incorporated into the strengths enhancement training program to provide more opportunity for college students to inventory possible strength areas:

The depth unfoldment method. Otto, (1967a, p. 231) was used as an introductory technique. Beginning with a group leader as a model each

member was requested, within a six minutes time period, to share with the group the most meaningful experiences in his life which contributed to the development of the person he is today. If the subject did not use his full six minutes, group members asked questions in an effort to augment interpersonal perception formation.

The Minerva experience is the second group exercise that was incorporated into the treatment procedure. In this exercise each member prepared in silence for about five minutes, thinking of "highly positive, formative experiences" that had occurred to him throughout life, beginning early in childhood. It was stressed that only positive experiences are shared with the group. Members then began to share these, with the most recent experiences coming first, proceeding backwards in time in periods of five years until the earliest childhood positive memories could be recalled.

Subjects

The 80 subjects who participated in the main study were volunteer college students enrolled in introductory social science classes at Utah State University during Winter quarter, 1976. With the instructors' approval the experimenter solicited subjects from Introductory Psychology 101 sections one (1) and two (2) and Introductory Sociology 101 section three (3). Psychology 101 section (1) was by far the largest class, with 267 students enrolled. Psychology 101 section (2), had 79 students, and Sociology 101 section (3), 31 students.

The rationale for utilizing volunteer college students is twofold.

Results of pilot testing indicate that a student population should provide more reliable test data than the more distressed patient population. Secondly, individuals who may utilize similar training groups in the future would most likely to do on a voluntary basis.

The student volunteers were assigned to one of three conditions: strengths enhancement (S E), the discussion group control conditions (D G C), and the no treatment control condition (C). Table 1 provides a description of the sex, age and class rank of subjects assigned to the experimental conditions.

Table 1.

Description of Sample Characteristics by Experimental Conditions

Subjects	Treatment Conditions		
	(S E)	(D G C)	(C)
Male	11	8	15
Female	17	16	13
Freshmen	20	17	17
Sophomores	6	6	7
Juniors	2	0	2
Seniors	0	1	2
Mean Age	19.5	20.4	20.3
n	28	24	28

In conditions (S E) and (D G C) students were assigned to one of six different group meeting times. These times allowed for variations in students' individual class schedules. The meeting times offered were:

Tuesday, January 20

1:30 - (N = 9) (D G C)

3:30 - (N = 11) (S E)

7:00 - (N = 6) (D G C)

Wednesday, January 21

1:30 - (N = 10) (S E)

3:30 - (N = 9) (D G C)

7:00 - (N = 7) (S E)

After students were assigned to a group time, the six groups were then randomly assigned the (S E) and (D G C) conditions, as designated above.

All group meetings were conducted in the "group room" in the University Counseling Center. Both (S E) and (D G C) groups met for eight consecutive weeks. Each session was one and a half hours long.

To make the testing experience more personally relevant, all subjects were informed that they would be given a general interpretation of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale and Personal Orientation Inventory. This was scheduled three days after posttesting.

Subject selection. During the first week of Winter quarter, 1976, the experimenter solicited student participation from the Psychology 101 classes. The students were informed that those who are enrolled in introductory psychology classes at Utah State University are typically offered a variety of assignments and projects through which credit can be earned.

The experimenter provided the following description of the project:

I am a doctoral student in psychology and am soliciting students to participate in a project that I am conducting this quarter. Your instructor has agreed to give credit toward your final grade for those of you who participate. Students may take tests and receive an interpretation of them at the end of the quarter, or they may join one of several discussion groups that will meet on a weekly basis for the duration of the quarter.

Students who have participated in similar groups in the past have generally reported the experience to have been a positive one. The groups are basically designed to provide the participants with a personal learning experience in psychology, with the emphasis on group discussion rather than on the study of written materials. Generally, the content of the group session will consist of psychological concepts and principles in the areas of personal competence and interpersonal relationships. Topics such as trust, self-disclosure, and risk-taking will be discussed.

The group meetings will be held for one and a half hours on a weekly basis throughout the quarter. You may add Psychology 121 (Human Relations), index 3311 section 2 for one (1) hour credit. A poster placed in the classroom indicates the days and times of the first group meetings. I will be available after class for the next few days to help assign you to a group time that is compatible with your various class schedules.

As students were assigned to one of six group times, an attempt was made to balance the groups as to sex. A separate sheet was provided for those students wishing to participate in only the test-taking (control condition) part of the project.

Contingency arrangements had been made with the Sociology 101 instructor to solicit student volunteers from his class if it appeared that the minimum number of volunteers from the Psychology 101 sections may not be sufficient to meet sample size requirements. Four students from this class were pretested, and two students completed the project through posttesting.

From the total sample of 89 subjects who were pretested, 28 subjects completed the (S E) condition, 24 the (D G C) condition, and 28 students the no treatment control (C) condition. Nine students did not complete post-testing and were dropped from the statistical analysis. Three of these students were from the (D G C) condition, two from the (S E) condition, and four from the (C) condition. A description of the students will be given in the discussion section of this paper.

Design. The primary purpose of this study was to determine the effects of the strengths enhancement training program, using measures of self-concept as the dependent variable. The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale and the self-regard and self-acceptance scales of the Personal Orientation Inventory were the assessment devices used. A pretest-posttest control group design was utilized so that comparisons between the experimental and control conditions could be obtained (Borg & Gall, 1963).

The Treatment Procedure

After the subjects were randomly assigned to the (S E), (D G C) and (C) conditions and pretested, the following procedure occurred in each of the three treatment (S E) subgroups. Members met in the "group room" in the University Counseling Center. The first session, in particular, was devoted to establishing that this group was different from traditional group therapy. The experimenter acted as group leader and undertook to set the goals of the group sessions as being to "assist (the participants) to discover and make use

of their potentialities, the range of their individual strengths, capacities and resources" (Otto, 1964, p. 5). This involves an explanation and definition of strengths and potentials and the philosophy on which this research was based.

Throughout the total process, group participation was sought and encouraged. This procedure had the purpose of enhancing group cohesion, while at the same time providing maximum opportunity for the group's collective creativity to develop. The emphasis on democratic participation provided a group climate which decreased the probability of member casualty rates. At the closing of each group session, the leader focused the group discussion on the "here and now." This focus not only offered a cue for participants to become more aware of their many personal reactions to a variety of stimuli in the group, but it also provided an opportunity for members to express feelings, reactions, or concerns relating to the group process.

In Otto's volume, Guide to Developing Your Potential (1967), he suggests the leaders should "praise" members for their efforts in the group. For this study "praise" was defined as "verbal reinforcement." The group leader verbally reinforced members' positive self and positive other statements on a variable ratio schedule averaging three responses per reinforcement (VR3). Leader responses included statements such as "That's good," "Yes" and "That's a good example."

Two techniques were used in the beginning sessions to assist members in reviewing positive experiences in their lives and to facilitate formation of personal and interpersonal perceptions.

The Depth Unfoldment Method (Otto, 1967b, p. 231) was used as an introductory technique. Beginning with the group leader as a model each member was requested, within a six minutes time period, to share with the group the most meaningful experiences in his life which contributed to the development of the person he is today. If the subject did not use his full six minutes, group members asked questions in an effort to get to know the person better.

The second introductory technique was introduced with a description suggested by Otto (1967b, p.233).

Another exciting group method which can bring about gains in self-understanding, create a more positive attitude about self and others, and also facilitate communication and interpersonal closeness, is called Minerva Experience. The name comes from the Roman Goddess of wisdom, Minerva. One of the contributions from psychoanalysis, traceable to the early work of Freud, is that every person in the process of growing up undergoes a series of traumatic experiences. Similarly, there is in every person's background, especially during childhood but also throughout life, a network of positive experiences. These creative, positive experiences charged with deep emotional meanings are called Minerva Experiences. Such experiences have a great deal to do with the way an individual grows and develops and with the network of his strengths and potentialities. They are believed to be as important as traumatic incidents, if not more important.

In this exercise each member prepared in silence for about five minutes, thinking of highly positive, formative experiences that had occurred to him throughout life, beginning early in childhood. It was stressed that only positive experiences were to be shared with the group. Members then began to spontaneously share these perceptions, with the most recent experiences

coming first, proceeding backwards in time in periods of five years until the earliest childhood positive memories could be recalled.

At the conclusion of this exercise the leader guided the discussion so that members became aware that the group was task-oriented. The desirability of receiving feedback from significant others was explored, and members were encouraged to obtain lists from three friends on their perceptions of the subjects' strengths. The voluntary nature of this exercise was stressed, and subjects who were willing to seek this feedback were requested to return copies of their lists to the group leader the following week.

The number of students who returned lists could provide a rough barometer of the degree to which members were accepting the initial purpose and goals of the treatment group as previously outlined by the group leader. Seven members returned lists. This exercise also provided a more realistic opportunity for subjects to discuss in the groups their apprehensions, concerns and willingness to commit themselves to personal goals.

The next task of the group was to develop a "strengths cue chart." This exercise provided the students with an opportunity to develop together a framework in which each member could then assess his own strengths and potentials across a wide range of human behavior.

The remainder of the training group sessions centered around the Multiple Strengths Perception method. The M.S.P. method was described in detail to the group, and the voluntary nature of participation was stressed. The following procedure continued in subsequent sessions until all group

members who desired received the "focus" of the group. Each member experienced the following phases of the M.S.P. method:

1. Using the "strengths cue chart," the target person began the process by enumerating and sharing what he perceived to be his strengths and potentials. While doing this, the group normally did not interrupt or ask questions.
2. In this phase the subject asked group members for their perceptions of his strengths and potentials and factors or forces which may keep him from utilizing these strengths.
3. When the group had contributed to the point where the members could see no other strengths and potentials in the target person, the group leader made the following suggestion: "Now that we have seen the range of strengths of 'target person,' what sort of fantasy or dream do we have about him if he uses all of these strengths and potentials? How do we see him five years from now"?

To provide written feedback for the target person, the group leader requested another group member to record the strengths and potential statements enumerated during the group session. The experimenter then prepared and typed the list of statements on an attractive form (see Appendix B), which was given to the subject the following session.

Discussion control group. To more effectively hold constant variables between the experimental and control conditions, the 24 subjects randomly assigned to the discussion group control (D G C) condition participated in

small group sessions of nine, six, and nine subjects each. The length of each session (one and a half hours) and number of total sessions (eight) were identical to the sessions of those students who participated in the treatment condition (S E).

To provide structure for these groups the topics listed below were introduced by the group leader as a discussion stimulus. These topics are listed in the "Outline of Study" syllabus for Psychology 121 (Issues in Human Relations) and closely follow the content of the human relations volume, Reaching Out, by David W. Johnson (1972). The topics are:

1. Self-disclosure and trust
2. Developing and clarifying direct communication skills
3. Understanding non-verbal communication
4. Helpful styles of listening and responding
5. Learning acceptance of self and others
6. Confrontation in human relationships
7. Reinforcing and modeling in interpersonal relationships
8. Conflict resolution

Beginning each (D G C) session the group leader presented a brief (10 to 15 minutes) overview of the theory and psychological principle to be discussed that day. These topics corresponded sequentially with the eight weekly group meetings. The leader then acted as a facilitator in guiding the group discussion. Subjects were encouraged to offer their reactions, opinions and suggestions.

Instruments

To assess the hypotheses formulated, two standardized tests were used: the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Fitts, 1965) and the Personal Orientation Inventory (Shostrom, 1966). Only those scales on the Personal Orientation Inventory which provide a measure of "self-perception" were included in the hypothesis testing.

Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. Fitts (1965) developed the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. This scale will be used in this study because of its advantages over other devices. Advantages include its wide applicability (normal versus psychiatric normative data), simplicity of completion for the subject, and multi-dimensionality in its description of the self-concept. The dimension areas (physical self, family self, etc.), which when combined yield an overall self-concept score, are theoretically consistent with strengths areas (physical strengths, relationship strengths) as described by Otto (1967b, p. 238).

The scale is available in two forms, a Counseling Form and a Clinical and Research Form. The Clinical and Research Form consists of 100 self-descriptive statements to which the subject responds on a five-point response scale, ranging from "completely true" to "completely false" according to the way the item describes his own perception of himself. Ten of these items came from the L-scale of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (1951) and constitute the Self-Criticism Score--a measure of overt defensiveness. Ninety of the items, equally divided as to positive and negative

statements, make up the eight subscales of the test, which when combined define the Total Self-Concept score (TP). The original criterion for item selection, from a large pool of self-descriptive statements, was perfect agreement by seven psychologists (judges) as to the classification of the items on the basis of their content. The classification system involves a two-dimensional, three by five scheme, which yields three row subscores and five column subscores, which when combined define the Total Positive score (TP).

The following is a description of the scales of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale:

The Self-Criticism Score (SC) is comprised of ten items and is a measure of defensiveness (low scores) or an openness or capacity for self-criticism (high scores).

The Total Conflict (TC) score measures the extent to which an individual's responses to positive items differ from, or conflict with, his responses to negative items in the same area of self-perception. High scores indicate confusion, contradiction, and general conflict in self-perception, while low scores have an opposite interpretation.

The Total Positive Score (TP) reflects the overall level of self-esteem. Persons with high scores tend to like themselves, feel that they are persons of value and worth, have confidence in themselves, and act accordingly. People with low scores are doubtful about their own worth, see themselves as undesirable, often feel anxious, depressed and unhappy, and have little

faith or confidence in themselves. The eight subscales which define the Total Positive Score are:

Row 1 P Score--Identity. These are the "What I am" items. Here the individual is describing his basic identity--what he is as he sees himself.

Row 2 P Score--Self-Satisfaction. This score measures the individual's description about how he feels about the self he perceives. In general, this score reflects the level of self-satisfaction or self-acceptance.

Row 3 P Score--Behavior. This score is derived from those items that say "This is what I do, or this is the way I act." Thus, the score measures the individual's perception of his own behavior or the way he functions.

Column A--Physical Self. This is a measure of the person's view of his body, his state of health, his physical appearance, skills and sexuality.

Column B--Moral-Ethical Self. This score describes the self from a moral-ethical frame of reference--moral worth, relationship to God, feelings of being a "good" or "bad" person, and satisfaction with one's religion or lack of it.

Column C--Personal Self. This subscale reflects the individual's sense of personal worth, his feeling of adequacy as a person and his evaluation of his personality apart from his body or relationships to others.

Column D--Family Self. This score reflects one's sense of adequacy, worth and value as a family member. It refers to the individual's perception of self in reference to his closest and most immediate circle of associates.

Column E--Social Self. This is another "self as perceived in relation to others" category, but it refers to "others" in a general way. The score reflects the person's sense of adequacy and worth in his social interactions with other people in general.

The Total Variability (TV) Score represents the amount of variability, or inconsistency, from one area of self-perception to another. High scores suggest that the person's self-concept is variable, and extreme scores indicate little unity or integration. High scoring persons tend to compartmentalize certain areas quite apart from the remainder of self. Low scores (extreme) suggest rigidity.

The Distribution Score (D) is a summary score of the way one distributes his answers across the five available choices in responding to the items of the Scale. High scores indicate that the subject is definite and certain in what he says about himself, while low scores suggest doubt and uncertainty.

The Personality Integration Scale (PI) is an empirical scale which is a measure that differentiates the PI group from other groups. This group was composed of individuals who were judged as average or better in terms of level of personality adjustment.

Reliability and validity of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. Test-retest reliabilities for the subscales, as reported in the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale Manual (Fitts, 1965), range from .80 to .92. Also reported was a study of psychiatric patients by Congdon, who "used a shortened version of the scale and obtained a reliability coefficient of .88 for the Total

Positive Score" (p. 15). Fitts, Adams, Radford, Richard, Thomas, Thomas and Thompson (1971) report a measure of internal consistency obtained by Nunley, who used the Kuder-Richardson split-halves technique and obtained "a reliability coefficient of .91 and a standard error of measurement of 3.30 for Total Positive Scores" (p. 62). The Total Positive Score has consistently been found to be the most reliable and stable score of the Scale.

Although Crites (1965) concluded that "data on the Scale's psychometric attributes indicate that it 'measures up' by traditional criteria rather well" (p. 331), he questioned whether an objective-type test could measure the true phenomenological self-concept, as the subject does not use his own words.

Fitts, Adams, et al., (1971) summarized the findings of Bealmer, Bussell, Cunningham, Gideon, Gunderson and Livingston, who found "a strong positive relationship . . . between the Tennessee Self Concept Scale Total Positive Score and a clear positive sense of identity represented in the responses on the 'Who Am I' Test" (p. 48), a measure which allows the person to use his own words in describing himself.

George (1969) found that all subjects scored higher on Total Positive and lower on Self-Criticism when they were instructed to answer items as to how they would like to be (Ideal Self) in contrast to when they received normal instructions. This conclusion is in agreement with Cronbach (1970), who suggested that in the area of self-description "it is more reasonable to interpret the report as a 'public' self-concept than as a statement of typical behavior or private self-concept" (p. 503). Referring to an earlier Cronbach

edition (Second), Fitts, Adams, et al., (1971) suggest that the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale "should be interpreted in this way. A reported self-concept may be thought of as a sample of behavior from a particular individual, and the data so obtained are valuable in their own right" (p. 54).

Although generally supporting the content validity of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, subsequent factor analytic studies (Fitzgibbons & Cutler, 1972; Gable, LaSalle, & Cook, 1973) suggested caution in utilizing subscale predictions. The factors which accounted for the largest proportion of variance were identified respectively as "ego strength" and "self-esteem."

Concurrent validity of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale has been fairly well established. The Total Positive Score is negatively correlated, $-.70$, with the Taylor Anxiety Scale (Buros, 1972). Thompson (1972) reviewed five studies using various anxiety devices and concluded that there is a substantial linear (negative) relationship between self-concept and anxiety. As reported earlier, high self-concept is positively correlated to behavioral competence (Seeman, 1966), internal locus of control (Felker & Thomas, 1971), willingness to self-disclose (Shapiro, 1968) and behavior which involves the expression of affection and inclusion (Schutz, 1967b).

Personal Orientation Inventory. The Personal Orientation Inventory (Shostrom, 1966) was developed to meet the needs of counselors and therapists who desired a comprehensive measure of values and behavior representative of positive mental health, or self-actualization.

The Inventory consists of 150 two-choice, paired opposite statements of values, behaviors, and self-percepts commonly associated with self-actualization. The Inventory consists of 12 scales, of which Inner Directedness (I) includes 123 of the 150 items and is, thus, the single most representative measure of self-actualization.

The Personal Orientation Inventory has been used extensively as a measure in encounter and training groups. In examining the effectiveness of a three and a half day human relations training program among high school teachers, Banmen and Cappelle (1972) found significant differences on six of the 12 scales. A three month followup study supported that changes toward self-actualization were maintained. Similar changes toward self-actualization as a result of encounter group experiences are reported by Bebout and Gordon (1972) and Foulds (1970, 1971).

Reliability and validity. Shostrom (1964) reports test-retest reliability coefficients of .91 and .93 for the Time Ratio and Support Ratio, respectively. The test-retest interval was not reported. In a one week test-retest Klavetter and Morgar (1967) report coefficients for the 12 scales ranging from .52 to .82 with a college sample (N=48). Ilardi and May (1968) report lower coefficients, .32 to .74, for a longer test-retest interval of approximately 50 weeks. Tosi and Lindamood (1975) report, in a critical review of the Personal Orientation Inventory, that Foulds computed an r of .96 for the mean scale scores of a control group for a nine week interval. They concluded that test-retest

reliability of the Personal Orientation Inventory is comparable to that of the majority of available personality measures.

Validity data on the Personal Orientation Inventory are generally quite favorable. Shostrom (1964) reported the Inventory significantly discriminated between clinically judged self-actualizing and nonself-actualizing groups on 11 of the 12 scales. Raanan (1973) criticized this initial study because the therapist population (clinical judges) was not described. Shostrom (1973) stated that the initial "judges" were 18 prominent doctoral-level psychologists, none of whom was involved in the initial item development. The Inventory's discriminative ability is also supported in studies by Fox, Knapp and Michael (1968) and McClain (1970).

Construct validity is further supported by Wall (1970), who concluded that self-actualization, as measured by the Personal Orientation Inventory, is relatively independent of Rotter's concept of locus of control. This lends support to the construct of the I Scale as measuring inner-directedness rather than internal control (I to internal control, $r=.07$).

Support for the concurrent validity of the Personal Orientation Inventory is reported by McClain (1970), who found that nine of the Personal Orientation Inventory scales were significantly correlated with staff evaluations of school counselors based on Maslow's criteria of self-actualization. Fox, Knapp and Michael (1968) found that all 12 scales of the Personal Orientation Inventory significantly differentiated hospitalized psychotic (nonhealthy) groups from both the "normal" and "self-actualized" subjects. Knapp (1965) found the

Personal Orientation Inventory was negatively and significantly correlated with neuroticism and positively correlated with extroversion, as measured by the Eysenck Personality Inventory. Supporting the previous finding, Knapp and Comrey (1973) also found a positive relationship between emotional stability (Comrey Personality Scales) and self-actualization.

Although Raanan (1973) has questioned the use of the Personal Orientation Inventory as a diagnostic instrument, its validity as a counseling and research instrument is well supported (Shostrom, 1964, 1966, 1973; and Tosi & Lindamood, 1975).

Self-concept and self-actualization. Wills (1974) utilized a multiple discriminant analysis to investigate the relationship of several variables (self-actualization and self-concept, values and achievement motivation) purported to contribute to self-actualization of college freshmen (N=300). Findings indicate that a close relationship may exist between self-actualization (Personal Orientation Inventory) and self-concept (Tennessee Self-Concept Scale).

Rogers (1961) and Maslow (1962) view "positive self-regard" (the approval of self and others) as being central to the actualization process. Persons who are considered "actualizing" according to Shostrom (1966) are considered also to have positive self-regard and positive self-acceptance.

It can be concluded, then, that self-concept is a less pervasive construct than self-actualization. Because the intent of the research was to develop a treatment procedure (Strengths Enhancement) that was parsimonious,

the hypotheses formulated were limited to the construct of self-concept as a dependent variable. Although there is some question as to the stability of the two scales of the Personal Orientation Inventory which purport to measure self-perception--self-regard, $r=.71$ and self-acceptance, $r=.77$ (Shostrom, 1966)--these scales will be included in the hypothesis testing to provide an independent measure of self-assessment within the actualization paradigm.

Data collection. All subjects were pretested on four successive school days prior to the first (S E) and (D G C) meetings, which began on January 20, 1976. The experimenter was seated at a desk outside the "testing room" in the University Counseling Center. As students arrived, standardized instructions were given for the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale; and the students would then enter the testing room, complete the test and return the booklet and answer sheet to the experimenter. Instructions were then given for the Personal Orientation Inventory, and the student would complete the inventory as above. Periodically, the experimenter entered the testing room to observe students' test-taking behavior and answer questions if necessary.

Nine weeks elapsed between pre- and posttesting. The above facility and procedure (T.S.C.S. administered first) were utilized in posttesting. Eighty-nine subjects were pretested, and 80 subjects completed posttesting.

Results

To test hypothesis 1 (no significant difference exists in self-concept between students who received strengths enhancement training and those who did not receive strengths enhancement training) and hypothesis 4 (no significant difference exists in self-concept scores between males and females who received strengths enhancement training and those who did not) a two-way analysis of covariance was used. Table 2 summarizes the results of the analysis.

Significance was obtained for hypothesis 1 at the .05 level. To determine the source of significance, a multiple comparison between all combinations of means was performed as suggested by Scheffe' (Ferguson, 1966). Table 3 summarizes the results of this analysis.

The results of Table 3 indicate that those students who received strengths enhancement training scored significantly higher than the control group on the Total Positive Scale of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. Significance was not obtained between the strengths enhancement group and the discussion group.

Null hypothesis 4 was not rejected. No significant difference exists in self-concept between males and females who received strengths enhancement training and those who did not.

Table 2

Two-way Analysis of Covariance Summary and Adjusted Total
Self-Concept Means of Experimental Conditions by Sex

Source	df	m.s.	F
Total	79	982.78	
Conditions	2	1198.63	3.50*
Sex	1	192.24	.56
Interaction	2	183.85	.53
Error	73	342.03	

	Treatment	Discussion	Control	Sex
Male	350.30	336.11	333.10	339.84
Female	347.41	343.31	338.59	343.10
Conditions	348.86	339.71	335.84	

*Significant at .05 level

Table 3

Multiple Comparison of Total Self-Concept
Means by Experimental Conditions

Comparison	F
Treatment - Discussion	3.16
Treatment - Control	6.94*
Discussion - Control	.56

*Significant at the .05 level

To test hypothesis 2 (no significant difference exists in self-concept variability between those who received strengths enhancement training and those who did not receive the training) and hypothesis 4 (no significant difference exists in self-concept scores between males and females who received strengths enhancement training and those who did not) a two-way analysis of covariance was used. Table 4 summarizes the results of this analysis.

Null hypotheses 2 and 4 were held tenable. No significant difference exists in self-concept variability between the treatment, discussion and control group conditions.

To test hypothesis 3 (no significant difference exists in self-concept conflict between those who received strengths enhancement training and those who did not) and hypothesis 4 (no significant difference exists in self-concept scores between males and females who received strengths enhancement training and those who did not) a two-way analysis of covariance was used. Table 5 summarizes the results of this analysis.

Null hypotheses 3 and 4 were held tenable. No significant difference exists in self-concept variability scores between the treatment, discussion and control group conditions.

Table 4

Two-way Analysis of Covariance Summary and Adjusted Self-Concept
Variability Means of Experimental Conditions by Sex

Source	df	m. s.	F
Total	79	200.56	
Conditions	2	139.49	1.13
Sex	1	2.47	.02
Interaction	2	145.45	1.18
Error	73	122.56	

	Treatment	Discussion	Control	Sex
Male	45.03	43.23	52.07	48.79
Female	45.42	47.35	46.50	46.42
Conditions	45.25	45.29	49.28	

No significant difference

Table 5

Two-way Analysis of Covariance Summary and Adjusted Self-Concept
Conflict Means of Experimental Conditions by Sex

Source	df	m. s.	F	
Total	79	66.85		
Conditions	2	136.83	2.57	
Sex	1	87.42	1.64	
Interaction	2	98.57	1.85	
Error	73	53.17		
<hr/>				
	Treatment	Discussion	Control	Sex
<hr/>				
Male	27.62	23.41	32.19	27.74
Female	30.24	29.32	30.15	29.90
Conditions	28.93	26.36	31.17	
<hr/>				
No significant difference				

To test hypothesis 5 (no significant difference exists in the total self-concept change means between high self-concept and low self-concept students) a two-way analysis of variance was used. Table 6 summarizes the results of the analysis.

Null hypothesis 5 was held tenable. There were no significant differences between high self-concept and low self-concept students.

To test hypothesis 6 (no significant difference exists in the inner directed means of male and female students who received strengths enhancement training and those who did not receive strengths enhancement training) a two-way analysis of covariance was used. Table 7 summarizes the analysis.

Significance was obtained at the .025 level for hypothesis 6. Between the experimental conditions the subjects' sex did influence the responses on inner directedness. To find the source of significance a multiple comparison was computed. Table 8 summarizes the results of the analysis.

The results of Table 8 indicate that males in the discussion condition scored significantly higher (.10 level) on inner directedness than males in the control condition.

To test hypothesis 7 (no significant difference exists in self-regard scores of male and female students who received strengths enhancement training and those who did not receive strengths enhancement training) a two-way analysis of covariance was used. Table 9 summarizes the results of the analysis.

Table 6

Two-way Analysis of Variance and Total Self-Concept Change Means^a
 Between High Self-Concept and Low Self-Concept Students
 by Experimental Conditions

Source	df	m. s.	F
Total	79	371.61	
High-Low	1	877.78	2.40
Conditions	2	990.44	2.78
Interaction	2	682.36	1.95
Error	74	348.87	

	Treatment	Discussion	Control	Status
High	7.07	2.58	2.54	12.19
Low	20.92	8.53	2.42	31.85
Conditions	27.99	11.11	4.96	

No significant differences

^a All means reflect positive change

Table 7

Two-way Analysis of Covariance Summary and Adjusted Inner Directed Means of Males and Females by Experimental Condition

Source	df	m. s.	F
Total	79	149.12	
Conditions	2	118.81	2.47
Sex	1	19.01	.40
Interaction	2	190.62	3.97**
Error	73	47.91	

	Treatment	Discussion	Control	Sex
Males	82.97	90.03	80.33	84.44
Females	82.55	83.08	84.64	83.42
Conditions	82.76	86.55	82.49	

**Significant at .025 level

Table 8

Multiple Comparison of Males and Females Inner Directedness
Mean Scores by Experimental Condition

Comparison		F
Males 1 ²	Feamles 1	.24
Males 1	- Males 2 ^b	4.82
Males 1	- Females 2	.001
Males 1	- Males 3 ^c	.92
Males 1	- Females 3	.32
Females 1	- Males 2	6.35
Females 1	- Females 2	.04
Females 1	- Males 3	.82
Females 1	- Feamles 3	.06
Males 2	- Females 2	5.37
Males 2	- Males 3	10.25*
Males 2	- Females 3	2.62
Females 2	- Males 3	1.22
Females 2	- Females 3	.36

*Significant at .10 level

^aTreatment condition

^bDiscussion condition

^cControl condition

Table 9

Two-way Analysis of Covariance Summary and Adjusted Self-Regard
Means of Males and Females by Experimental Condition

Source	df	m. s.	F
Total	79	4.96	
Conditions	2	2.26	.85
Sex	1	19.85	7.53**
Interaction	2	1.44	.54
Error	73	2.63	

	Treatment	Discussion	Control	Sex
Males	13.45	12.79	12.76	13.00
Females	12.10	11.52	12.26	11.96
Conditions	12.78	12.16	12.51	

**Significant at .01 level

Null hypothesis 7 was not rejected. Significance was obtained at the .01 level, with males scoring higher than females on the self-regard scale across all experimental conditions.

To test hypothesis 8 (no significant difference exists in self-acceptance scores of male and female students who received strengths enhancement training and those who did not receive strengths enhancement training) a two-way analysis of covariance was used. Table 10 summarizes the results of the analysis.

Null hypothesis 8 was rejected at the .025 level. Students in the discussion condition scored significantly higher on self-acceptance than students in treatment or control conditions.

Tables 11 and 12 provide a summary of the pretest grand means and standard deviations, adjusted posttest means of experimental conditions and obtained F values for the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale and Personal Orientation Inventory, respectively.

Table 10

Two-way Analysis of Covariance Summary and Adjusted Self-Acceptance
Means of Males and Females by Experimental Condition

Source	df	m. s.	F
Total	79	15.76	
Conditions	2	37.38	4.02**
Sex	1	.54	.05
Interaction	2	12.40	1.33
Error	73	9.28	

	Treatment	Discussion	Control	Sex
Males	13.95	17.01	13.35	14.77
Females	14.30	15.66	14.87	14.94
Conditions	14.13	16.34	14.11	

**Significant at .025 level

Table 11

Summary of Means, Standard Deviations and Obtained F
Values for the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale

Variable	Pre-Test Mean ^a		Post-Test Mean ^b			F
	N=80		N=28	N=24	N=28	
	Mean	SD	Treatment	Discussion	Control	
Self-Criticism	35.5	6.05	33.7	36.5	36.2	3.06
Net Conflict	2.1	11.5	1.5	- .1	3.3	.76
Total Conflict	30.1	7.6	28.9	26.3	31.1	2.57
Total Positive	334.4	30.4	348.8	339.7	335.0	3.50*
Row 1	124.9	10.1	129.5	125.6	125.4	2.77
Row 2	100.3	15.1	105.4	103.8	100.0	2.30
Row 3	108.4	11.5	113.4	110.9	109.4	1.91
Col. A.	67.3	8.1	70.0	69.7	68.2	1.29
Col. B.	67.8	8.2	69.7	67.7	66.6	2.38
Col. C.	52.4	9.8	66.7	64.9	64.7	.84
Col. D.	69.6	8.0	72.2	70.4	70.1	1.93
Col. E.	66.01	7.8	69.3	67.6	66.6	1.71
Total						
Variability	50.2	12.2	45.2	45.3	49.3	1.13
Col. Total V	30.6	9.2	28.8	27.2	31.4	1.62
Row Total V	19.5	5.7	16.4	17.8	18.0	.84
Distribution	106.8	19.9	110.1	106.0	109.3	.37
Personality						
Integration	10.2	2.9	11.4	12.2	10.7	1.31

^aGrand mean and SD

^bAdjusted mean

*Significant at .05 level

Table 12

Summary of Means, Standard Deviations and Obtained F Values
for the Personal Orientation Inventory

Variable	Pre-Test Mean ^a		Post-Test Mean ^b			F
	N=80		N=28	N=24	N=28	
	Mean	SD	Treatment	Discussion	Control	
Time Competent	14.9	2.6	16.1	16.3	16.2	.10
Inner-Directed	79.9	11.1	82.7	86.5	82.4	2.47*
SAV	20.0	2.6	20.7	21.0	20.3	.69
Existentiality	18.5	4.3	19.8	20.8	20.0	.56
Feeling Reactivity	14.7	3.0	14.8	16.1	15.7	1.76
Spontaneity	11.5	2.1	12.6	12.7	12.3	1.36
Self-Regard	11.9	2.9	12.7	12.1	12.5	.85
Self-Acceptance	14.3	3.6	14.1	16.3	14.1	4.02**
Nature of Man	11.6	2.0	11.6	12.2	11.8	.56
Synergy	6.8	.1	7.0	7.1	6.9	.32
Acceptance of Aggression	14.9	2.9	15.8	15.9	15.8	.01
Intimate Contact	16.3	3.7	17.7	18.1	17.0	1.06

^aGrand mean and SD

^bAdjusted mean

*Significant at .10 level

**Significant at .025 level

Discussion

The objectives of this study were to develop a strengths enhancement group procedure and test its' effects on the direct enhancement of self-concept of college students.

A description of the development of the strengths enhancement treatment is found in the narrative of this paper (Pilot Test I and II). It was the intent of the experimenter to limit and modify Otto's treatment procedures into a form more conducive to experimental control, hypothesis testing and replication.

Evaluation of Findings

To test the effectiveness of the strengths enhancement training procedure eight hypotheses were formulated. Each hypothesis will be discussed separately, with a general overview following.

Null hypothesis 1 was rejected at the .05 level of significance. Students who received the strengths enhancement training scored significantly higher on the Total Positive Scale of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale than did the control subjects. The adjusted means for the strengths enhancement, discussion control, and control groups were 348.86, 339.71 and 335.84, respectively. The main hypothesis of this study is supported. A group procedure that provides a method through which college students can identify personal strengths and resources and conceptualize that they possess a variety of human

potentialities, can be effective in stimulating perception of themselves in a positive direction (increased self-concept). Because the M.S.P. technique was the central procedure in the strengths enhancement training group, Otto's tentative hypothesis with regard to the M.S.P. method and self-concept is also supported.

The second hypothesis tested postulated that there would be no difference in variability scores of subjects as a result of experimental condition. The hypothesis was not rejected. Subjects who participated in the strengths enhancement and discussion groups decreased the amount of Variability and inconsistency from one area of self-perception to another slightly (45.25 and 45.29), while the control group remained the same (49.28). Inspection of Table 11 suggests that the total sample pretest mean and SD were 50.2 and 12.2, respectively. These scores are similar to those of published norms (Fitts, 1965) (N=625), which were 48.53 and 12.42. Although well integrated people usually score below the mean on this scale (Fitts, 1965, p. 3), no inferences can be made. Because the directional changes were in a positive direction for all students who participated in the group process, it would be interesting to increase the treatment participation and time interval and observe more precisely this dimension of self-concept.

Hypothesis 3 tested the effects of the strengths enhancement treatment on self-concept Conflict, or the extent to which subjects' responses to positive items differ or conflict with their responses to negative items. One could hypothesize that students who participated in a group process which

focuses on self-assessment may increase Conflict scores as a result of re-evaluation of self, or decrease the amount of conflict as a result of becoming more definite about their self-perception. Although no significant differences were found, the Total Conflict means for the strengths enhancement group (28.93) and discussion group (26.36) were below the mean of the control group (31.17).

Another hypothesis could be formulated with regard to differential response patterns to positive versus negative items in the same area of self-perception. Because the strengths enhancement treatment was primarily supportive in nature--focusing on the identification of strengths, capacities and skills--students may have had a tendency to over-affirm their positive attributes on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. Results in Table 11 indicate that there were no significant differences between the experimental conditions on the Net Conflict means. This suggests that students did not tend to either over-affirm the positive statements or over-deny the negative items. The self-concept increase for the strengths enhancement group, therefore, did not appear to be influenced by defensive distortions.

The objective of testing hypothesis 4 was to determine if the sex of the subject would influence his or her performance on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale as a result of participation in the strengths enhancement group. Findings represented in Tables 2, 4 and 5 indicates that sex was not an intervening variable across or within experimental conditions.

One could speculate that the sex of the group leader (male) had no particular effect on the self-concept outcome measures, but to explore this possible source of variance further it would be interesting to replicate this study using a female group leader and then compare self-concept findings. Replication of this study using co-leaders, possibly a male and female team, could also yield favorable results. Kimball and Gelso (1974) indicated that "for growth groups to have the desired impact they should either employ more than a single leader or, if not, should have a highly experienced facilitator" (p. 41).

As the data from the present study indicate, the strengths enhancement treatment was effective in modifying the self-concept of participants. The purpose of hypothesis 5 was to investigate whether subjects low in self-concept (median split) would respond differently to the experimental conditions than subjects high in self-concept. No significant differences were found.

It should be noted, however, that the low self-concept students' increase (mean 20.9) on the Total Positive score was greater than the increase of the high self-concept students (7.0). These findings suggest that the strengths enhancement treatment appears to be an effective procedure with students having scores along a wide range of the self-concept continuum.

One could speculate that the low self-concept students had greater gains because there was more room for improvement, but an interesting question arises. Literature on supportive techniques in counseling generally suggests that an individual who views himself in a negative manner tends to

reject supportive and positive statements from others because these statements are inconsistent with his self-structure. It has been postulated that while many persons join "growth groups" for the purpose of exploring a novel and challenging experience, others may seek this type of groups because of deficiency motivations. Further research using the supportive methodologies of the strengths enhancement training program in various context settings (counseling-problem solving versus training-didactic) may prove fruitful.

To provide an independent measure of self-perception and to investigate the relationship between self-concept and self-actualization, three hypotheses were formulated and tested using the Personal Orientation Inventory.

Significance at the .025 level was obtained for the sex by treatment interaction, indicated on Table 7. Males in the discussion condition scored significantly higher on the inner directed measure than males in the other conditions, $p < .10$ (Scheffé method). Students in the discussion condition also scored significantly higher, $p < .10$, on the inner directed scale and self-acceptance scale, $p < .025$, than students in the other conditions. On the self-regard measure males scored significantly higher (.01) than females across all conditions.

The difference favoring males over females on these scores is difficult to explain within the present research design. The literature indicates that sex differences occur frequently on the Personal Orientation Inventory (Shostrom, 1966). The number of males in the discussion condition was only eight as compared to 16 females, and the higher scores may reflect an

artifact of the sample size. The group leader's sex could have been an intervening variable, but the most likely explanation may be found in different cultural expectations placed on males and females. Males are usually taught to be more assertive and present themselves as being more in charge of their lives in general than females.

The above significant increases plus the general rise in scores for the discussion group indicate that the discussion format influenced the Personal Orientation Inventory responses, while the strengths enhancement program did not. Although it was suspected that there would be a relationship between self-concept as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale and "self-perceptions" as measured by the Personal Orientation Inventory, the results of this study do not substantiate this expectation. Since the reliability of the self-regard and self-acceptance scores is questionable, these results do not substantiate a nonrelationship between the variables, but point out the need for a more sophisticated research methodology to investigate this question.

The rise in the Personal Orientation Inventory scores for the discussion group was unanticipated. A post hoc hypothesis would suggest that the discussion program was effective in teaching interpersonal skills and attitudes that were rewarding. A female subject stated that she began to "self-disclose with a quiet (isolated) roommate that (she) didn't particularly like, and as a result (they) had become friends." Another commented "girls in the dorm have started to come to me with their problems--I guess I'm a good listener." This was in reference to what she had learned in earlier group

sessions, particularly the one on helpful styles of listening and responding.

Since selected scores on the Personal Orientation Inventory did not decrease, it is unlikely that students (total sample) were attempting to fake a good impression of good adjustment (Braun & LaFargo, 1969) or present a pseudo-self-actualized image--scores above the typical self-actualization range ($T = 50-60$) (Shostrom, 1966).

Although students in the discussion group evidenced no deviance tendency, the rise in scores could reflect a learning effect. Braun and LaFargo (1968) found that college students could raise Personal Orientation Inventory scores if they received specific information on self-actualization theory. Since the discussion group format was based on teaching the methods of interpersonal skills leading to self-actualization, no substantive conclusion can be reached. It is plausible that students in the discussion group were experimenting or identifying with attitudes and behaviors that are characteristic of the self-actualized model.

The degree to which the strengths enhancement and discussion control groups were structured could account for some of the differences evidenced by students' scores on the dependent variable measures. The students in the strengths enhancement group had higher scores on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, while students in the discussion control condition had higher scores on the Personal Orientation Inventory. The strengths enhancement training program was highly structured in its methodologies, and the discussion

group format was not. The discussion condition, therefore, allowed students to model a less directive group leader and respond from inner-direction rather than external structure. This behavioral practice is related more to self-actualization than self-concept.

Drop outs. Nine students did not complete posttesting. Two were from the strengths enhancement condition, three from the discussion condition, and four from the control condition.

One student assigned to the strengths enhancement condition dropped the group after the first meeting. He was contacted and stated that he was experiencing problems with school in general and had withdrawn from all classes. The other student attended the first three sessions and informed me that she was withdrawing from school to return to her native land but said that she had enjoyed the group experience.

Of the three students who were assigned to the discussion condition, one dropped out after the first session. He appeared to be a distressed young man, and when I attempted to reach him by phone it was learned that he had given the phone number of the student government offices on campus and no one there knew of him. The other two students who were pretested did not attend any group meetings.

All the subjects in the control condition who were not posttested had withdrawn from the Psychology 101 class. The mean Total Self-Concept score for these nine students was 315.6, a score considerably lower than the adjusted pretest mean for the students who completed the program, 334.4.

The instructor for the larger psychology class indicated that approximately 15 to 25% of students enrolled in Psychology 101 usually withdraw from the class. There was no evidence to indicate that the students who withdrew from school or from any of the experimental conditions did so as a reaction to encountering a negative experience in this research project.

Conclusions

Two major conclusions seem to stem from this study. The first is that the strengths enhancement training program was effective in modifying the self-concept of college students. Since the central method of the program was the Multiple Strengths Perception technique, Otto's hypothesis is supported. The Human Potential movement is one of the more moderate and positive programs within the broader rubric of the sensitivity, encounter movement. Demonstrating empirical support for methodologies utilized will not only produce more efficacious treatment but also encourage more accountability among practitioners.

The second major conclusion from this study is that the content of the Psychology 121 course (Issues in Human Relations) appears to be effective in teaching students about positive mental health. Data indicate that students in the discussion condition did not attempt to fake a good impression or present a pseudo-self-actualized profile on the Personal Orientation Inventory. Whether significant behavioral changes occur or not, it appears that students at least were willing to "try on" the role of self-actualization. It should be

noted that those who participate in the 121 course attend for three hours per week, while the discussion subjects participated for one and a half hours per week.

Observations

The strengths enhancement procedure developed in this study was effective in modifying the self-concept of college students. One objective of this study was to develop a treatment procedure that was parsimonious and conducive to experimental control. Several elements of the strengths enhancement training program can be identified as being independent, and the proportion of variance contributing to the significant main effect is unknown.

The (1) Multiple Strengths Perception technique (the primary method) contributed to over one half of the group participation time. The other methods used included those in the orienting phase: (2) the depth unfoldment method, (3) the Minerva experience, and the development of the (4) strengths cue chart. The other identifiable methods were the (5) systematic use of verbal reinforcement and the provision of (6) written feedback. Those conducting further research may refine the methodological design to ascertain more accurately the effects of the above independent variables.

The experimenter was impressed with the enthusiasm of the students who participated in this study. Typically college students are interested in achieving greater personal awareness. This may account for psychology being one of the preferred undergraduate majors nationwide. Students in

the discussion group often focused the group toward a personal rather than the designed cognitive-discussion level. One student said to me, "I wish I could know you better--I would like to be closer to most people in this group."

The small group setting offers an environment where persons can risk experimentation with new interpersonal skills, attitudes and modes of behavior. The results of this study support the notion that a university can provide within its curriculum programs designed to offer "positive experiences" in human growth, as well as the traditional didactic-cognitive emphasis.

Summary

The strengths enhancement training program was developed and evaluated in order to determine empirically if a group method designed specifically to assist subjects in the identification of personal strengths, resources, and potentials, would be effective in broadening their perceptions of themselves in a positive direction.

The strengths enhancement training program was based primarily on the work of Herbert A. Otto, using the Multiple Strengths Perception method as the central component of the training program. That method was pilot tested, and program modifications were made on two occasions.

A pretest-posttest control group design was used to assess the 80 Introductory Psychology volunteers. Twenty-eight subjects were randomly assigned to the strengths enhancement condition, 24 students to the discussion group control condition, and 28 students to the no treatment control condition.

The students who were assigned to the strengths enhancement condition and the discussion group control condition met in small groups, three groups for each condition. The subgroups in both conditions met for eight weekly sessions of one and a half hours duration.

The strengths enhancement training was the independent variable. Self-concept (as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale) and self-

perception (as measured by the Personal Orientation Inventory) were the dependent variables.

The format of the discussion group control condition was patterned after a class taught at Utah State University, Psychology 121 (Issues in Human Relations). Principles of effective human relationship, including trust, self-disclosure, and listening skills, were presented to subjects as a discussion stimulus at the beginning of each weekly group session. The Psychology 121 course content was based on self-actualization theory.

Analysis of covariance results indicated that students who participated in the strengths enhancement training condition scored significantly higher (.05 level) than students in the no treatment control condition on the Total Positive Score of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. Results did not appear to be influenced by defensive distortions or students' tendencies to over-affirm their positive attributes on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale.

Subjects in the discussion group control condition scored higher on 10 of the 12 Personal Orientation Inventory scales than subjects in the other experimental condition, with significance occurring on the Inner-directed scale (.10 level) and the Self-acceptance scale (.025 level). Data suggest that students in the discussion control condition did not attempt to fake a good impression or present a pseudo-self-actualization profile on the Personal Orientation Inventory.

The strengths enhancement training program was effective in modifying participants' self-concepts (as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale),

but no differences were evident on the self-perception measures of the Personal Orientation Inventory. The variables which contribute to self-concept and self-actualization appear to be independent.

Recommendations

To clarify the group leader effects, conduct a study with various combinations of group leaders, i.e., female versus male, and male and female co-leaders.

Replicate the study and increase the treatment time from one and a half to three hours per week.

Replicate the study at other universities to increase the generalizability of this study.

Provide a three-to-six month follow up assessment of the dependent variables to determine the stability of the self-concept increase.

Conduct research designed specifically to determine the relationship between self-concept and self-actualization.

Conduct research investigating the supportive methodologies of the strengths enhancement treatment with subjects who score on the lower half of the self-concept continuum. This may provide information useful in working with more distressed populations.

Replicate the study with different populations--a patient group versus a normal group, to determine if the strength enhancement methodologies are effective with the more distressed subjects.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Feedback Sheet, Evanston, Wyoming

NAME:

THESE ARE STRENGTHS I SEE IN MYSELF:

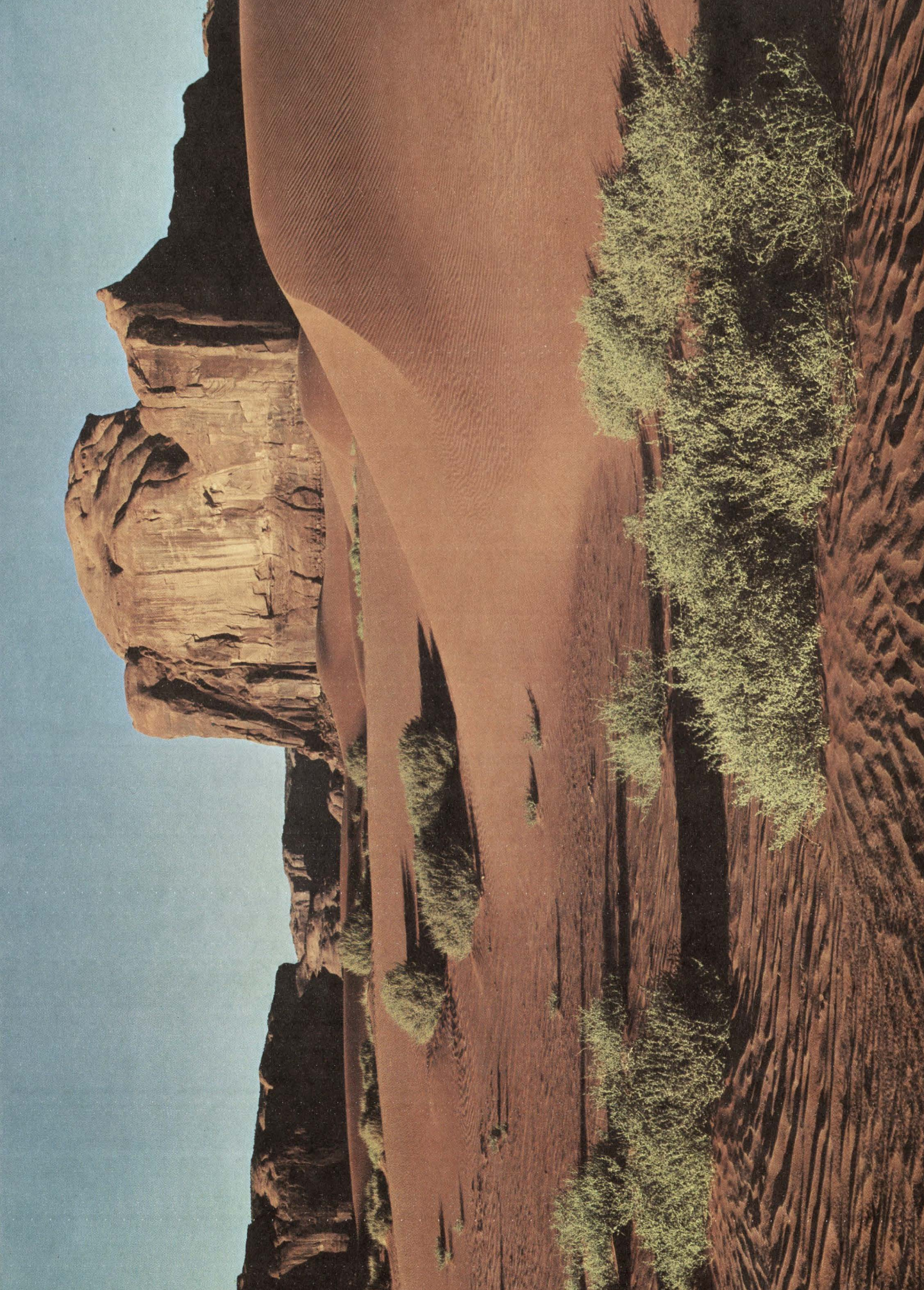
1. I can do anything if I put my mind to it.
2. I am good at camping.
3. I can control my temper.
4. I can control my emotions, this is a real strength.
5. I have strong relationships with people, especially my friends.
6. I can make my relationships with boys strong and make them last.
7. I get along with people at school.
8. I am good at things I do with my hands, like knitting, sewing, macrame and weaving.
9. I am good at running wild.
10. I am teaching myself to play the piano.
11. I love to cook.
12. I have a good imagination and I like to write.
13. I can imagine forms in the clouds.
14. I care about people and myself and love to touch.
15. I love life
16. I have control in my family and that feels good.
17. I can get what I want. I have persistence and try to work for things I get.

THESE ARE STRENGTHS OTHERS SEE IN ME:

1. You care for others.
2. You have lots of enthusiasm, you get involved.
3. You have a high level of energy.
4. You communicate with people.
5. You are optimistic about life.
6. You do not let people get you down any more and can get and keep things together.

THESE ARE POTENTIALS I SEE IN MYSELF:

1. I am increasing my responsibility for life.
2. I have the potential to be good at the piano and loom.
3. I have the potential to develop love and caring (to care for people and not to manipulate them).
4. I have the potential to get things done physically, like camping.
5. I have the potential to gain more self control, hold back my anger, and be more in charge of my emotions.



THESE ARE POTENTIALS OTHERS SEE IN ME:

1. You have the potential to make your own decisions.
2. You can do anything you want to do.
3. You have the potential to be independent.
4. You have the potential to be a good piano player.
5. You have the potential to accept others as they are.
6. You have the potential to stop running from others.
7. You are very creative.
8. You have the potential for a deep appreciation for the real world.

Appendix B. Feedback Sheet, Utah State University

NAME:

THESE ARE STRENGTHS I SEE IN MYSELF:

I'm good in softball, like to ski and swim.
I am good in sewing and ceramics.
I have the ability to express myself through abstract art.
I am in good health; it is important for me to keep it (I respect my physical self).
I enjoy teaching--like gymnastics to children.
I feel that my **strongest** area is in my spiritual strength.
My second strongest area is in interpersonal relationships; I have the ability
to develop good ones.
I know how to care.
I enjoy helping others.
I have a sense of humor--and can take a joke.
I care for my family and am willing to assist them (grandmother).
I don't judge people; I accept them as they are.
I'm open minded, don't close out other's opinions and suggestions.
I am a recreational leader.

THESE ARE STRENGTHS OTHERS SEE IN ME:

You accept compliments with grace.
You have a deep love for people--are always giving, thinking of others.
You have a Christian attitude.
You are a mellow person.
You are trustworthy--I could tell you anything.
You have the ability to do what you put your mind to.
You are always striving to better yourself.
You are willing to risk yourself in new situations, i.e., yoga.
You are a positive person, looking for the good in others.
You are feminine and dignified.
You have good taste in clothes.
You have a great smile.
You are easy to love.



Appendix C. Letter and Form

As part of the Adolescent Treatment Unit's summer program we are initiating a study in which we will attempt to measure the effects of a specially designed group therapy with adolescents. This group will focus on helping your child identify and verbally express positive characteristics about himself/herself and others. We believe that people who begin to talk and see themselves in a more positive way will also begin to behave in a more positive manner.

We will attempt to measure the effects of this group experience to determine if the adolescents benefit sufficiently to incorporate this group technique as part of our overall treatment program. In this way we can continue to determine that the therapy techniques we use in our program are beneficial and effective.

Will you please read and sign the enclosed form and return it in the envelope provided at your earliest convenience. We would like to begin this project in the first week of June, 1975.

If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely yours,

Tim A. Grether, M.S.W., Coordinator
Adolescent Treatment Unit

Paul A. Saxon, M.D.
Clinical Director

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Enclosure

CONSENT FOR SUMMER STUDY PROGRAM

I _____ voluntarily consent that my son/
daughter _____ be included in the Summer Study
Program designed to measure and enhance his/her self image. I understand
that this program is designed specifically for this purpose and the entire
therapy program will be conducted by qualified personnel.

Witness

Parent or Guardian

Date

Date

Witness

Date

Vita

Tony J. Strelich

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: Strengths Enhancement Training: Self-Concept and
Self-Actualization

Major Field: Psychology

Biographical Information:

Personal Data: Born in Salt Lake City, Utah, April 16, 1941,
son of Anthony and Dorothy F. Strelich, Jr. Married
Kathleen L. Falk, October 29, 1966. Two children.

Education: Attended Judge Memorial Grade School; graduated
from Judge Memorial High School, Salt Lake City, Utah,
in 1959; attended Mesa Junior College, Grand Junction
Colorado, 1960-1961; received Bachelor of Science
degree from the University of Utah, Salt Lake City,
Utah, with a major in sociology, in 1967; received a
Master of Social Work degree from the University of
Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, with a major in group work
in 1970.

Professional Organizations: National Association of Social Workers,
Utah Conference on Social Welfare, Wyoming Conference on
Human Resources.

Professional Experience: Teaching Assistant in Psychology at Utah
State University, 1974; Internship at Northern Utah Mental
Health Clinic, Logan, Utah, 1973 to 1975; Psychiatric
Social Worker, Wyoming State Hospital, Evanston, Wyoming,
1970 to 1972.